2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

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611 The Maltese have large families and reckon kin relationship equally through males and females. Each person is thus at the centre of a wide network of cognates and affines. All these rela-
602 tives do not have equal importance; a person normally makes a distinction between his immediate family (*qraba tal-familja*), his close relatives (*qraba ta' ġewwa*) and his distant relatives (*qraba fil-bogħod*). A man's immediate family consists of his parents and his siblings and their fiancées, wives and children. This set of relatives normally sees each other at least once a week, and would be invited for a baptismal or betrothal celebration. The close relatives usually include grandparents, parents' siblings and their
● [574] wives and children – his first cousins. These relatives all expect to be invited to a wedding, if not to a baptism. If they live in different villages they will also exchange visits during their annual festas. Distant relatives include the siblings of grandparents and great-grandparents and their descendants. A person normally has no formal contact with this set, but he recognizes his relationship to them if it is known to him.

Upon marriage, a person extends the range of his immediate family to include the corresponding set of his spouse. He may meet more frequently with his wife's immediate family than with his own, especially if they live equidistant from both sets (or in his wife's village).

It should be noted, however, that these sets of kin are not fixed or bounded groups; a person is relatively free to invite whom he wishes to any given ceremony. Physical as well as genealogical distance combines with sentiment to determine the actual relatives who are placed in these rough categories by an individual. Thus a person may be on closer terms with a second cousin who lives next door than with a first cousin living in another village.
[578] Normally, however, certain relatives *expect* to be invited to particular ceremonies, and failure to do so leads to friction, or may be a reflection of an existing conflict. Thus, while a first cousin does not expect to be invited to a baptismal or betrothal party, he does expect an invitation to a wedding. A second cousin does not expect to be invited to either, although he often is. These sets of kin relations are thus flexible; long dormant links can be manipulated for special purposes, such as to arrange introductions to

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

club and a sports club. In Farrug, for instance, there are two band clubs – one of which is dedicated to St. Martin, the other to St. Roque – a football club and an active Labour Party committee; while Kortin has a band club, a social club, a Labour club, a football club and a troop of Boy Scouts. The term secular, used in this context, requires a few words of qualification. Although clubs and associations which I have called secular do not form part of the Church, this does not necessarily mean that they are opposed to it, or are cut off from it. Quite the contrary. Almost every club has a chaplain who serves as a link between it and the parish priest. Most clubs take part in certain religious functions, especially during the week preceding Easter. Moreover, many of the clubs have dedicated themselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary by means of special religious ceremonies. Often this dedication is renewed annually. Only the clubs of the Malta Labour Party do not have any linkage with the Church.

The band clubs are the most important secular societies. They are formally constituted associations with elected committees, premises of their own and a large body of dues-paying members drawn from all occupational and social classes. The first band clubs were established shortly after the middle of the last century in order to organize the external celebrations and provide music for the annual festas of village patron saints. The clubs multiplied rapidly, and soon became civic and social centres. They have broadened their scope to include dramatic groups, reading rooms and places where members can gamble out of sight of the watchful eyes of the law. Most clubs have large concert halls that can be used for wedding receptions. Today, each club usually has a well-stocked bar, a television set and a billiards table.

But a band club is more than just a social centre. As it usually plays an important part in organizing the external celebration of the annual festa, the men who run the club make decisions which affect all the inhabitants. Furthermore, the club often represents the community to the outside world. Not only is the club's brass band considered as the village's band when it plays at other festas, but the club also provides a welcome to important visitors from outside. Thus when the Governor or the Archbishop makes an official visit, he normally calls on the band clubs, where he is given a reception on behalf of the entire village.

Z: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

The important officers of a band club are among the most influential people in the community, and are usually chosen from the village's leading citizens. The president is the figurehead of the club. He greets distinguished visitors and handles many of the ceremonial and business relations the club has with other groups within and outside the community. He also presides over committee meetings and over the annual election of new officers. The day-to-day running of the club is in the hands of the secretary, who is registered with the police as the club's official representative. Much of the success of the club depends upon his ability to run its social activities and administrative affairs. Other important committee members are the vice-president, the treasurer and the bandmaster. The latter is very often an outsider who comes to the village only for the weekly rehearsal of the band.

Though the formal authority of the committee members extends over the members of the association only while they are in the club, their position in the club occasionally gives them a voice in decisions which affect the entire community. This, in turn, gives them a measure of authority over persons who are not members of the club.

But not all villages have band clubs. The small villages of Gharghur, Dingli and Safi have not been able to afford the luxury of their own bands; though each has a social club that performs much the same function as a social and civic centre. A few villages, such as Kortin, have both social clubs and band clubs. But there are neither band clubs nor social clubs in the Maltese villages of Marsaskala, Marsaxlokk and Mgarr. In Gozo, only Rabat, Xewkija and Xaghra have band clubs. All the villages without clubs are fishing or agricultural communities. This may be because the men of these villages do not dispose of the leisure time in the evening necessary for a club to be a success: the farmers are too tired, and the fishermen are off tending their nets.

There are also political and football clubs in most Maltese villages. In Gozo there are a few football clubs, but no political clubs. These clubs are organized in much the same way as the band clubs, and corresponding office holders have similar functions and authority over their members. These offices, however, confer much less prestige. The football clubs, in particular, play only a small part in village affairs. The Malta Labour Party, as has already been noted, is the only political party which has clubs

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

Many of them have stopped going there. In point of fact, Sur Gorg and the secretary are strongly opposed to the Labour Party, though many of the younger men and some of the most active older members support it. A number of people living nearby have complained that members praise Mintoff in loud voices. There is growing pressure on Sur Gorg to ban all political conversation there. He has so far resisted the pressure, for he believes that if he were to give in, he would drive away the very members who form the backbone of the club. His chief problem, as he described it to me, is how to focus the attention of the members on something other than politics. He is therefore doing his best to obtain the permits necessary to open the theatre for which they have been planning and saving for years. He feels that in the excitement of building, the members will forget their political differences and reunite, and thus the club will pass safely through this crisis. But the permits have been slow in coming and meanwhile the pressure on him is building up. Two important members of the committee have already resigned, 'under the influence of those busy-bodies in Kelinu's', as some members described it.

The men in charge of the St. Martin Band Club in Farrug face much the same problem. As has already been noted, most of the leaders of the two political blocs in the village are members of the St. Martin club, and several of them are on its committee. This difference of political loyalty often provokes quarrels over matters of policy. During the centenary, for example, the committee were sharply divided over whether to salute the Archbishop with the customary barrage of fireworks when he entered the village to take part in the ceremony. The matter was put to a vote, and the MLP faction won. The disgruntled losers began talking about firing off their own salute of welcome. But the crisis that this action would have brought about was avoided when the Vicar-General officiated in place of the Archbishop, who was indisposed. As the MLP supporters had nothing against him, he received the full barrage of aerial bombs and fire crackers. The rift was thus healed, and all joined in to celebrate a rousing feast.

The following year the festa again brought a crisis with it. This time it was a far more serious one. Most of the young Labour supporters, in retaliation for the way the Church had attacked their party and its leaders, flatly refused to have anything to do with the feast. These young men included virtually all the partit's

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

CHRISTMAS

The Maltese are not at all wanting 796
in the religious fervour and the exhibition of hearty demonstrations of delight with which Christians welcome the anniversaries of the Nativity of our Blessed Redeemer.

This is made very apparent by the rich decorations and the illuminations which are to be seen in the churches on Christmas night.

Places of public resort and private residences are also richly decorated with floral emblems and devices on this occasion.

On the 24th December—Xmas eve— 796
most of the inhabitants, especially 574
young men, do not retire to bed at all 262
but ramble about, some parading the streets playing sweet melodies to charm the ears of the people, and others going

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

796 in companies to some one of their
• 574 friends, at whose house they amuse them-
262 selves eating honey cakes and pancakes or fritters, and playing for nuts till the church bells ring a little before or after midnight.

At the conclusion of the service they come out again and devote the remainder of the night to amusements.

796 The approaching festival of Christmas
534 is heralded in some of the villages of
[184] Malta by the appearance of the "zakk" and "tambur" players in the streets. (*)

[237] The *zakk* or bagpipe is a wind instrument—one of the primitive instruments of sylvan music—formed of an inflated dog skin, which is held by the player under his left arm, with the legs

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[541] (*) The *Zakk* and tambourine are also in use amongst our lower classes on the days of Carnival.

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

852 it is a sign of a liberal character—if he
[787] picks out the inkstand it points towards
[828] inclination for trade or the bar—if he takes the book, the rosary or the candle the assumption is that he intends to dedicate his life to the service of the church.

[574] When the baby makes his or her selection, the guests are treated with refreshments, and they all drink the health and future prospects of the small individual in question.

FUNERALS

764 On the death of a Maltese, two or
767 three women called *Neuuieha*, hired for
[583] the occasion, and attired in long mourning cloaks, immediately entered the house of the deceased singing in a low and dismal voice, some appropriate deathsong. These women cut away

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

787 585 533 in a rage, and he could not be persuaded to go back to his wedding before the organist could be found and the organ played for the occasion.

PAYING VISITS

273 594 576 825 If a person goes to pay a visit, for the first time, to a party and is not treated with a sort of drink called *zambur* — made of aniseed—a mouse enters the chest of drawers and gnaws all the petticoats of the mistress of the house.

SENDING TO THE OVEN

252 562 Some people think it a great shame for a woman who sends dishes to be cooked in an oven when her husband is away from the Island.